

## Department of Permitting and Inspections

Zoning Division  
645 Pine Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
[www.burlingtonvt.gov/pz](http://www.burlingtonvt.gov/pz)  
Phone: (802) 865-7188  
Fax: (802) 865-7195

William Ward, Director  
Scott Gustin, AICP, CFM, Principal Planner  
Mary O'Neil, AICP, Principal Planner  
Ryan Morrison, Associate Planner  
Layne Darfler, Permitting Technician  
Alison Davis, Zoning Clerk  
Theodore Miles, Zoning Specialist  
Charlene Orton, DPI Administrator



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Design Advisory Board  
**From:** Scott Gustin  
**Re:** 237-241 Riverside Avenue  
**Date:** July 27, 2021

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**File:** ZSP-21-2

**Location:** 237-241 Riverside Avenue

**Zone:** NAC-R / RCO-RG **Ward:** 1E

**Parking District:** Multimodal Mixed-Use

**Date application accepted:** June 11, 2021, Complete June 22, 2021

**Applicant/ Owner:** Steve Kredell / Karass Properties, LLC

**Request:** Sketch plan review for 65-unit multi-family attached apartment building and related site improvements.

### Overview:

The applicant is requesting sketch plan review of a proposal to construct a 65-unit apartment building and related site work across two adjacent properties along Riverside Avenue. Most of the parcel area is zoned RCO; however, approximately the front quarter of each parcel is zoned NAC-R. All of the proposed development appears to sit within the NAC-R zone. An existing residence would be torn down as part of the proposal. Presumably the two parcels will be merged, but that is not evident in the sketch plans.

This project is large enough that it will require a pre-application meeting with the local NPA, and meeting with the city's Technical Review Committee is recommended. Major impact review will be entailed, and inclusionary housing units will be required.

The Development Review Board will review this sketch plan August 3, 2021.

### Article 6: Development Review Standards

#### *Part 1, Land Division Design Standards*

No land division is proposed. Presumably the two parcels will be merged into one parcel as part of the subsequent zoning permit application. The two existing parcels will require two zoning permit applications – one for each parcel.

#### *Part 2, Site Plan Design Standards*

##### *Sec. 6.2.2, Review Standards*

##### *(a) Protection of important natural features*

Much of the property is affected by the riparian and littoral conservation overlay zone, which extends inland 250' from the bank of the Winooski River. While not clearly depicted on the sketch plans, this overlay zone looks to closely follow the RCO zone boundary. Most or all of the development appears to stay outside of the overlay and the underlying RCO zone. Clarity as to whether any development encroaches will be needed upon zoning permit application.

A portion of the property is also within the Special Flood Hazard Area along the river. No development is included within this area.

*(b) Topographical alterations*

The sketch plans include an aerial photo of existing conditions, including existing topographic lines. A site plan with proposed topographic lines is not included. Based on what has been provided, it looks like the proposed building will be set atop the slope nearest Riverside Avenue. How the structure will integrate with the slope as it descends towards the river is not yet clear. The zoning permit application will need to include existing and proposed topography and a cross section depicting how the proposed building will interface with the slope of the land.

Given the history of unstable slopes along this side of Riverside Avenue, a geotechnical analysis of existing and proposed conditions should accompany the zoning application. Such analysis was required prior to approval of the recently permitted senior housing facility at 362 Riverside Avenue.

*(c) Protection of important public views*

The site contains no identified public view corridors.

*(d) Protection of important cultural resources*

The project site has no known archaeological significance. The river corridor is an archaeologically sensitive area; however, no construction is proposed alongside the waterway.

*(e) Supporting the use of alternative energy*

See Sec. 6.3.2 (f).

*(f) Brownfield sites*

The subject property is not included on the Vermont DEC Hazardous Site List.

*(g) Provide for nature's events*

The proposed development is large enough that it will require an erosion control plan and a post-construction stormwater management plan for review by the City's stormwater engineering staff.

Building entries are sheltered. Much of the parking is underneath the building.

*(h) Building location and orientation*

The proposed apartment building is set appropriately close to Riverside Avenue as generally contemplated for new development in the city's mixed use zones. The pattern of development on either side of the subject property is irregular with a sewage treatment plant to the west and a carwash to the east. The scale, orientation, and placement of the proposed building more closely

reflect the multi-family residences on the opposite side of Riverside Avenue. As proposed, the building contains a clearly identifiable central entrance with vehicular access points to either side.

*(i) Vehicular access*

Two curb cuts are proposed – one for a small visitor parking area in front of the building and another for access into the garage. The proposed curb cuts will require review and approval by the Department of Public Works. The turning radius into the first visitor parking spot looks tight. Confirmation that it is actually accessible will be needed.

A traffic study should be provided with the zoning permit application. The basics such as nearby intersection level of service, anticipated daily trip generation, and PM and AM peak hour trip generation (now, at build out, and in the future) should be included.

*(j) Pedestrian access*

The building's primary entrance facing Riverside Avenue connects to the public greenway with a front walkway. No pedestrian routes within the garage are evident. Routes connecting people to building entries, while protected from vehicular circulation, are needed.

*(k) Accessibility for the handicapped*

Handicap accessibility details are not included in the sketch plans. Handicap parking and access points will be required and are under the purview of the building inspector.

*(l) Parking and circulation*

Most of the proposed parking is enclosed within a garage at street grade. The garage parking spaces are largely screened behind full or partial building walls or landscaping along the front of the building. Unlike in the downtown, activated building space is not required in front of the street-level parking spaces. The visitor parking area is small but is set in front of the building. This criterion discourages such placement. Elimination of these surface spaces in front of the building is recommended.

All of the parking spaces appear to be 18' X 8.' The 18' depth is sufficient. The width must be at least 8.5' unless compact spaces are proposed. In that case, 8' width is adequate. Back up space is 22' in most cases, just shy of the 23' needed for two-way circulation. Back up for one garage space appears to be just 18' and for one of the surface visitor spaces just 16.' Some flexibility is available in the application of these dimensional standards following consultation with the City Engineer based on unique site characteristics articulated in this criterion.

*(m) Landscaping, fences, and retaining walls*

Some basic landscaping details are included in the sketch plans. A more fully developed landscaping plan, with species and size at planting noted, will be required with the zoning permit application. Emphasis should be placed on enhancing the building features and the pedestrian experience along the public greenway and on screening where necessary. The proposed extent of tree clearing will also be needed on application site plan(s).

No fencing is evident in the sketch plans. If any is proposed, it must be included in the project plans with details as to placement, dimensions, and type provided.

No retaining walls are depicted on the sketch plans. Presumably, given the slope of the land and the placement of the building, retaining walls will be included in the project. If so, details will be needed as to construction type and location with cross sections provided to depict adjacent grades. If in excess of 3' tall, review by the city engineer will be required.

*(n) Public plazas and open space*

No public plazas or open spaces are proposed. The floor plans depict a stairway down to ground level behind the building. Is this simply emergency egress, or is a more formal access to the wooded portion of the property down to the river contemplated?

*(o) Outdoor lighting*

No outdoor lighting details are included in the sketch plans. Details as to fixture type, location, and illumination levels will be required with the zoning permit application.

*(p) Integrate infrastructure into the design*

No dumpster or mechanical equipment locations are included in the sketch plans, nor are mailbox locations noted. This information will be required with the zoning permit application.

**Part 3, Architectural Design Standards**

**Sec. 6.3.2, Review Standards**

*(a) Relate development to its environment:*

**1. Massing, Height and Scale:**

As noted previously, the pattern of development on adjacent properties is irregular. The proposed building bears more relationship to the multi-family condominium buildings on the other side of Riverside Avenue. Within this context, the scale and height of the proposed building is similar to that of the Riverwatch and Salmon Run condos. The individual building is somewhat larger than those individual buildings but certainly much smaller in overall extent of development.

The street level of the proposed building is clearly articulated as distinct from the upper stories. Above this street level, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stories are matching in appearance. The top story is set back from the front of the building and clad in different material to further delineate it as a separate building component. Overall, the project design successfully incorporates varying materials, projections, and recesses to mitigate the perceived mass of the structure.

**2. Roofs and Rooflines.**

The proposed building has several distinct components with flat roofs at varying heights. The flat roofs, while unique in the immediate area, are appropriate to the proposed building design.

**3. Building Openings**

Generous glazing is a dominant feature of the building's primary façade along Riverside Avenue. Reflecting the interior layout of the building, it is concentrated in the upper stories. The sketch plans do not include building details on the backside. Presumably, similar glazing is proposed to take advantage of views across the river and towards Winooski.

*(b) Protection of Important Architectural Resources:*

*Burlington's architectural and cultural heritage shall be protected through sensitive and respectful redevelopment, rehabilitation, and infill. Where the proposed development involves buildings listed or eligible for listing on a state or national register of historic places, the applicant shall meet the applicable development and design standards pursuant to Sec. 5.4.8. The introduction of new buildings to a historic district listed on a state or national register of historic places shall make every effort to be compatible with nearby historic buildings.*

The existing residence that will be demolished is not historic, nor are the adjacent properties. The proposed structure will not adversely impact Burlington's wealth of historic resources.

*(c) Protection of Important Public Views:*

There are no identified public view corridors from or through the subject property.

*(d) Provide an active and inviting street edge:*

As noted above, the street level of the proposed building is differentiated from the upper stories. Central within this street level is the building's primary entrance. It is well articulated and inviting with a direct connection to the adjacent greenway running parallel to Riverside Avenue. While the parking on either side of the primary entrance is permissible, effort should be made to enhance the pedestrian experience as much as feasible with hardscaping, sheltered spaces, and possibly other measures.

*(e) Quality of materials:*

*All development shall maximize the use of highly durable building materials that extend the life cycle of the building, and reduce maintenance, waste, and environmental impacts. Such materials are particularly important in certain highly trafficked locations such as along major streets, sidewalks, loading areas, and driveways. Efforts to incorporate the use of recycled content materials and building materials and products that are extracted and/or manufactured within the region are highly encouraged.*

Limited building materials are noted in the sketch plans. Various wooden materials will clad the building's exterior. Fiberglass windows will be installed. The zoning permit application will need to include a complete exterior building materials list.

*(f) Reduce energy utilization:*

The sketch plans note that the building will incorporate the highest degree of energy efficiency, approaching net zero. No details are provided. All new construction is required to meet the Guidelines for Energy Efficient Construction pursuant to the requirements of Article VI. Energy Conservation, Section 8 of the City of Burlington Code of Ordinances.

*New structures should take advantage of solar access where available, and shall undertake efforts to reduce the impacts of shadows cast on adjacent buildings where practicable, in order to provide opportunities for the use of active and passive solar utilization.*

No utilization of renewable energy is evident in the project plans. The building is set far enough from adjacent structures to avoid adverse shadow impacts.

*(g) Make advertising features complementary to the site:*

No exterior signs are depicted in the sketch plans. All exterior signs are subject to separate zoning permit.

*(h) Integrate infrastructure into the building design:*

No exterior mechanical equipment is evident in the project plans. If any is proposed, whether at grade or rooftop, it must be depicted and screened.

*(i) Make spaces secure and safe:*

Construction shall comply with all required building and life safety codes as determined by the building inspector and fire marshal.

*Building entrances/entry points shall be visible and adequately lit, and intercom systems for multi-family housing should be incorporated where possible, to maximize personal safety.*

Exterior entries should be illuminated. Intercom systems or similar are recommended to maximize personal safety.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

None for sketch plan review.